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DAKAR PLS PASS RAO, ODC, AND DAO

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/07/2017
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [GA](#) [SG](#)
SUBJECT: THE GAMBIA: UPDATE ON TIES WITH SENEGAL

REF: A. BANJUL 134 ET AL
[1](#)B. BANJUL 83 ET AL(ALL NOTAL)

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JOSEPH STAFFORD, REASON 1.4 (B AND D)

SENEGALESE AMBASSADOR'S DOWNBEAT ASSESSMENT

[1](#)1. (C) In recent conversation with Ambassador, Senegalese Ambassador Mamadou Fall asserted that heightened strains in the Senegalese/Gambian relationship persisted and cited the ongoing trial here of five Senegalese customs officials as a case in point (ref a). It was clear, Fall asserted, that Gambian authorities had no real case against the five officials, as their alleged offense -- illegally entering Gambia's territorial waters in their patrol boat -- was actually sanctioned under bilateral agreements. He concluded that the GOTG leadership had decided to prosecute the officials to signal defiance to Dakar. Fall said that the case was being followed closely by the Senegalese leadership and that guilty verdicts would only exacerbate bilateral tensions. (NOTE: The court had been scheduled to issue its verdicts May 7, but failed to do so; our legal sources expect issuance of the verdicts "within the next few days." END NOTE)

CASAMANCE

[1](#)2. (C) Fall stated that the GOTG was maintaining its unhelpful posture on the Casamance (ref b). He said that three leading MFDC figures cooperating in GOS peace efforts -- Alexandre Djibba, Magne Dieme, and Kamoughe Diatta -- picked up months ago by Gambian authorities remained in detention here. In response to question, Fall observed that Gambian President Yahya Jammeh was "probably" continuing to provide sanctuary in The Gambia to elements associated with MFDC hard-liner Salif Sadio. The Senegalese Ambassador was pessimistic about prospects for an early improvement in The GOTG's posture on the Casamance dossier. He acknowledged that Jammeh's mischief-making stemmed at least in part from his resentment at Senegalese authorities' alleged harboring of the presumed ringleader in the March 2006 abortive coup plot, then-CHOD Col Ndure Cham.

CALL FOR WADE-JAMMEH SUMMIT

[1](#)3. (C) Fall expressed frustration over the GOTG's rebuffing of his repeated requests to meet with Jammeh to underscore Dakar's concern over the mounting bilateral irritants. At the same time, Fall ruled out any precipitous Senegalese move -- e.g., a repetition of the August/October 2005 closure of the border with The Gambia -- in response to the Gambians' "provocations." Arguing that a meeting between the Senegalese and Gambian leaders could help greatly to ease

tensions, he confided that he had urged Dakar to have President Wade take the initiative by offering to come to Banjul. Fall said he was awaiting Dakar's reaction to his suggestion and declined to speculate on prospects of a favorable response.

COMMENT

14. (C) We continue to believe that the Gambian "provocations" toward Senegal are due in large part to still-deep resentment by Jammeh over his suspicions of a Senegalese hand in the March 2006 aborted coup plot and of GOS' harboring of the presumed ringleader. The GOTG's refusal, as recounted by Fall, to grant him an audience with Jammeh also suggests the latter's unwillingness heretofore to set aside his resentment and work with the GOS to ease tensions. The verdicts in the trial of the Senegalese customs officials' could serve as a signal of Jammeh's latest intentions toward Senegal, as we find it plausible that he would seek to influence the trial's outcome. END COMMENT
STAFFORD